

Recreation Committee Meeting

August 21, 2023

A meeting of the Recreation Committee was held on this date beginning at 2:02 p.m. over video conference call.

Councilmembers Present: Councilmember Kevin Shealy (Chair), Councilmember William Dudley Gregorie (Vice-Chair)(*absent*), Councilmember Stephen Bowden, Councilmember Caroline Parker, Councilmember Jason Sakran, and Mayor John Tecklenburg.

Staff Present: Jason Kronsberg, Director, Parks; Laurie Yarbrough, Director, Recreation; Magalie Creech, Assistant Corporation Counsel; Melissa Cruthirds, Assistant Corporation Counsel; Mallary Scheer, Assistant Corporation Counsel; Matt Frohlich, Deputy Chief Financial Officer; Rick Jerue, Senior Advisor to the Mayor; and Wanda Stepp, Clerk of Council's Office (recording).

Also Present: Steve Hamer.

Chairman Shealy called the meeting to order.

The meeting was opened with a moment of silence by Chairman Shealy.

Approval of Minutes

On a motion by Councilmember Bowden, seconded by Councilmember Sakran, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the June 14, 2023 Recreation Committee meeting.

Old Business:

None

New Business:

a. Update on Johns Island park fields – Steve Hamer, Charleston County School District:

Steve Hamer said his title was Associate for Facilities Management for the Charleston County School District. He worked for Jeff Borowy who was the Chief Operating Officer. Chairman Shealy had asked him to brief the Committee on this project which they had been developing for several months with the upgrades to the ball fields at Johns Island Park. Johns Island Park was one of the City-owned fields where St. John's High School played their home baseball and softball games. It was a beautiful facility and park. They were looking forward to the project. He was a Johns Island resident, and he didn't use the park often, but he did enjoy driving by since he had been involved with the project and spending more time on the ground.

Mr. Hamer showed the layout of the park which showed the multi-purpose field, the soccer field, the tennis courts, and the ball field. He said the scope of their work involved renovating the baseball and softball fields which included new grass, new irrigation, new lighting, new batting cages, new dugouts, and new bullpens as well as a pavilion for the press box and a storage area. They were going to develop that with planting greenery and brick pavers. They weren't doing anything to the practice field in their current scope, but the lighting and the irrigation they were putting together would benefit that field, as well. He had also been asked to look at adding to the

work with paying for renovating the multi-purpose field which included new sod, irrigation, and fencing. He said the layout of the pavilion was beautiful in how they had it designed with pedestrians walking through and participating as spectators for the ball games.

Mr. Hamer said a couple of ongoing things they were working through was full Technical Review Committee (TRC) approval as there were some issues regarding the stormwater design. They were asked to go back and look at a re-design which they did and had submitted it to the TRC and were waiting on final comments. Hopefully, they could move that forward and start getting to work on the stormwater portion. Another thing, and he wouldn't consider it controversial, but the standard they were looking at in terms of how they build the dugouts having them all CMU. The way the fields at Lucy Beckham High School were laid out was they were all CMU. He said Mr. Kronsberg and others had made a good point in that that may not work as well for a City park where they couldn't control the access to the fields like a high school baseball field so maybe provide a design for the dugouts where they could have 24-hour security or at least observe inside the dugouts. He thought they might have some way where they could meet both of those intentions and that standard of how they had the entire CMU block dugouts. That was the expectation at least with some athletic directors and school officials as to how they liked those fields to look and that was what they were shooting at, but he understood why that didn't work as well in this case.

Mr. Hamer said one of the things that had come to light in terms of some controversy in the community, that they would be able to move past, was that since they didn't start as early as he had wanted to on the project, they still had to finalize an updated stormwater design. So, he shifted some money around to other projects through CCSD and wanted to wait until he locked in and finished the stormwater before they began working on those fields. He said there was a little bit of controversy in that they were delaying the project unnecessarily which wasn't the case as they were still going to finish it close to when they were going to originally finish it. He said there was the possibility to lose some of the annual funds that he was getting and there wasn't clarity on exactly when they were going to be able to start. He said it was a great project and he looked forward to moving forward with it. It was going to be under the auspices of an MOU that they were developing between CCSD and the City because they would be responsible for the maintenance of the field just like they did Stoney Field in providing maintenance and support. He thought to the extent they could move forward with their most recent stormwater design in the next month or so they would be on track to finish the project by the fall of next year. He looked forward to having a good project for the City and for the sports team.

Mr. Hamer said one of the things that his team was working on and he anticipated their final stormwater mitigation design would require was moving some vegetation that was currently around a ditch. He didn't know that it was very impactful, but it did have a little bit of a sound buffer between the pickleball courts and the neighborhood. He said part of the design was to look for ways to either provide some revegetation along that ditch or provide some sound reduction panels on one side of the tennis court or his folks had recommended maybe putting a fence inside the ditch. He thought providing additional vegetation once they completed the upgrade to the ditch and putting sound panels on the tennis court would make a difference. He wasn't sure that what was there currently provided a lot of muffling, but he thought it would probably be a good optic as they were trying to not make the sound worse by the foliage they had to remove.

Councilmember Parker asked if City recreation would be utilizing those at any point. Mr. Hamer said yes and that was the way it was currently in that their teams used the field for their mostly

spring sports schedule. When it wasn't being used by the high school, the City had access to it. Councilmember Parker asked Ms. Yarbrough how did the overlap work. Ms. Yarbrough said for the last several years they had been giving the field to St. John's High School for their baseball and softball programs. They came in the afternoons after school, ran their practices, and held home games there. It had worked okay, and they hadn't had any problems. She said the adult programs happened in the evenings after that. The youth program on Johns Island they had allowed the Johns Island Little League to use fields in trying to help them since she didn't have a physical presence out there yet. They had made it work, but she suspected as they grew, those were all adult-sized fields that Mr. Hamer was talking about, and they were going to need some youth-sized fields with all the families moving out there.

Mayor Tecklenburg thanked Mr. Hamer for their collaboration with the City. He said that collaboration was a two-way street in that sometimes the City had a park property that the City agreed to allow CCSD to use for their recreation purposes and then sometimes CCSD did the same and allowed the City to have recreation programs on CCSD school properties, so it was a true partnership. He thanked Mr. Hamer for toughing it out with the City on the stormwater requirements. He said going through Johns Island Park on a couple of occasions after intense storms and that the water wasn't running off like it needed to, so improvements to the drainage was good for the park, good for the neighborhood, and around there, as well. He knew the City's requirements were tougher than they used to be, but in the long run it would be worth it. He thanked Mr. Hamer for allowing the City to piggyback with them on the upgrade of the City's playing field over there. He knew that the City had some improvements identified in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and it included numerous improvements to the park. He had asked Ms. Yarbrough and Mr. Kronsberg what the most needed improvement was on the City side and they said it was upgrading that playing field. He said allowing that to go forward with Mr. Hamer's project took a little burden off the City, and the more the City got done the better. He thanked Mr. Hamer for including that as part of their scope and the City had identified some funding to make that happen. He told Mr. Hamer to march on and include that in the project if he would. Mr. Kronsberg said they were working weekly with Mr. Hamer to make sure they were all in lockstep and moving it forward. Chairman Shealy thanked Mr. Hamer and said they appreciated all he did and the way he worked with the City so well, and the true partnership they had.

c. Update on end of summer and fall sports registrations:

Chairman Shealy said things were about to pick up as school was getting ready to get back in and about to start the fall sports and wrap up the summer. Ms. Yarbrough said they had had a busy, great summer. The last couple months had been hot, but they had managed to get through it. She said because of their contract with USA Management this year for the swimming pools they were able to run all four pools this summer and they were able to teach four sessions of public swim lessons. They were able to accommodate kids and young children, and some adults in summer swim lessons which they were excited about. They would be closing their seasonal pools on Labor Day, with the exception of W.L. Stephens, as that pool still had a water heater and they would continue to run it on a not full schedule, but a pretty robust schedule through at least the end of October depending on the weather. In addition to the public lessons they taught, they were able to teach lessons to all of their summer camps that the City ran at Arthur Christopher, St. Julian, and Forest Park. The Police Department's Camp Hope Kids used the City's pools as well as Kids on Point, which was one of their partners, brought kids to the City's summer pools, as well, and were able to take some lessons as well as District #20. They were happy that they

were able to accommodate as many needs as they did, and it had been a safe summer. She was appreciative of everybody's efforts on their aquatics side as it had been great. She said the day camps that the City ran to offer parents of children ages 6 to 12 an opportunity to be in an active full-day camp were all full and ran great. They had a full number at the City gym, St. Julian, James Island Recreation Center, Bees Landing, Forest Park, and Daniel Island Recreation Center. At any point between 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m., there were kids everywhere taking programs and activities during summer camp which worked out well. Their specialty camps and sports camps were all full every week all summer. Their golf course at one point was serving 30 kids a week with golf course camp, and they had about triple that number on a waitlist. Their tennis camps at both Maybank and Charleston Tennis Center were full. They ran a number of sports camps, basketball, flag football, baseball, and softball. They all did great and they were able to accommodate a number of children. They ran their drop-in programs and their summer lunch program where they fed the free lunches in the free and reduced areas. The Shaw Center ran that, Freddie Whaley, Thomas Johnson, Martin Park, Mall Park, and the Pink House, which was not a City facility, but one the City partnered and collaborated with. They also did it at Lenevar and at Willie Gaines in West Ashley. They were able to reach a number of children they might not have normally reached in that way. They had a great number of partners this summer. Carolina Studios, which was the mobile recreation music program that Mark Bryan from Hootie and the Blowfish, that his foundation ran. She said they had them in all their summer camps. They worked with Kids on Point at the Municipal Golf Course, at their gymnastics center at Shaw, and the pools as well as the Camp Hope ran by the Police Department and visited City facilities. They also partnered with the Charleston Police Department and the FLIP League for the summer basketball league which ended Saturday night at Forest Park. She said it was a busy and successful summer and they were currently cranking into fall. They had completed their registration. Currently, they had 563 children registered for sports in the downtown area, they had 1,576 children registered on James Island, they had 1,062 children registered on Daniel Island, and then they had 1,347 in West Ashley, and they had another 1,200 girls playing volleyball in the volleyball league program which would start up. That was right at 6,000 children Citywide on ball fields, multi-purpose fields, baseball and softball fields, and also in their gyms, so there was a lot of activity going on and they were excited. It was almost that time when the high schools were back playing sports and they felt like it was time for them to be doing the same thing, and all their fall registrations looked great.

Councilmember Parker asked about gymnastics. Ms. Yarbrough said they registered for that in the spring so they could accommodate for those recreation classes and the team program. They were all full and they had waiting lists. She told Councilmember Parker she needed to stop in as the Parks Department had just completed some work and the new flooring was amazing. It gave the place a new look and a new smell. They were moving all the equipment back in, doing some cleaning, and they would be re-doing the front desk. They would start on the other part of the building in November, but she thought they would see what a great addition the new flooring was and how it would look in their bathrooms and in the lobby of the front part of the building. She was very pleased.

Mayor Tecklenburg asked how many kids were involved in the summer programs. Ms. Yarbrough said they averaged about 850 kids a week in summer camps depending on specialty camps and summer day camps. They didn't run every sports camp every week, but they averaged about 850 children in a City of Charleston summer camp program every week. Mayor Tecklenburg asked if they kept track of how many kids were City residents versus out-of-City residents. Ms. Yarbrough said they did. She didn't have the number in front of her, but when they registered the children in

RecTrack, they had it broken down into residents and non-residents. She said most of them were residents, but she could get the split and send it to the Committee. Mayor Tecklenburg said he would be curious to see. Councilmember Parker said she would as well as she knew James Island was a different beast, but it would be nice to see. Ms. Yarbrough said she could break it down by the borough. On James Island it might be a little higher since they didn't have the Town of James Island giving those program services and then they also picked up some of Folly Beach. In West Ashley, most of the people that lived in St. Andrew's went to St. Andrew's and the City went to City, so it would probably split a little differently in the other areas, but she could do it Citywide and by borough for the Committee. Mayor Tecklenburg asked if they registered by Johns Island, as well, or did they sign up per West Ashley and James Island. Ms. Yarbrough said they registered and depending on which side of the Island they lived, probably closer to West Ashley or James Island, depended on where they actually chose to play, but the City did have their residency, as well.

Councilmember Parker said Ms. Yarbrough had given them a wonderful spreadsheet at the Master Plan Workshop. She asked out of those numbers how many teams was City staff managing. Ms. Yarbrough said in terms of baseball, James Island had 11 baseball teams and 6 softball teams, 23 flag football teams, close to 55 soccer teams, and tackle football, which she gave all the credit to Coach McCoy at James Island Charter High School and what he was doing. He had 4 teams just on James Island which was really good. She said sports were growing there on James Island, but she would get a breakdown of all the areas and all the volunteer coaches. Chairman Shealy thanked Ms. Yarbrough as they were touching a lot of City lives with the kids and programs they were doing and appreciated all the efforts of all of Ms. Yarbrough's staff. He said Ms. Yarbrough had been short-staffed in a lot of areas and to have that much participation and to be able to run the programs they were, it was very much appreciated. He knew it wasn't easy currently. Ms. Yarbrough said they had some great staff that did a tremendous job. She said it wasn't her, it was the superintendents, coordinators, and field supervisors. If they went to West Ashley Park, they would see Stacy Collins walk in lockstep with every volunteer coach she had. She was out there for every practice. It was the same thing with Kate on James Island at Bayview and Allison at the James Island Recreation Center. She said those people were working that 9:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m. shift to be out there with the families and getting to know them which was that personal touch and relationship they build. She said they were proud of that, and she was proud of the folks she got to work with every day, and she thanked the Committee for their support. Chairman Shealy said he knew Mr. Kronsberg had been working hard on fields and facility updates over the summer as he had seen it when he walked through West Ashley Park. He appreciated the job Mr. Kronsberg had done as far as that was concerned, as well.

b. Discussion of maintenance of ball fields for sports teams to use in the fall:

Chairman Shealy apologized for skipping over item 4.b. Councilmember Parker said that was perfect because hearing about the registration for the fall was a key piece of her questions for the ball fields. Ms. Yarbrough had run off those numbers of teams which was almost 90 teams. She said their ball fields looked incredible. She was out at Bayview that weekend enjoying it and it was unbelievable what Kate and Allison do with the fields. Everybody on James Island just knew and it was incredible what they could pull together and coordinate with 90 teams. As she had brought up before, they had a lot of fields, teams, and kids that wanted to play all the time and sometimes they were limited to one practice a week or just based on field availability. She was curious about the other fields such as Stephen Washington, Thomas Johnson, and Ferguson Village if they

were going to add those to the list of maintenance, dragging the fields, lining whether they were using the outfield for flag football. She said it had been a concern for a few seasons and she wondered where they were and where they could be with that. Mr. Kronsberg shared a presentation of numbers to show what they could do based on the requests. He went through some participation increases going back to some data that Ms. Yarbrough and her team had shared with him. It was broken down by Peninsula, James Island, Daniel Island, and West Ashley in 2013 to 2022. Based on participation of youth sports only, the Peninsula had stayed relatively the same, James Island had an increase in 67%, Daniel Island had grown 106%, West Ashley was 19% with a City-wide total increase of 44%. With regard to Parks Grounds Maintenance staffing, which consisted of athletic field staff, grounds maintenance staff, horticultural staffing, and urban forestry staff, in the year of 2015 their budgeted positions were 92 for that division. In 2023, they had dropped down to 87, both filled in 2015 and 2023 were about the same with about the same vacancy with 29 and 23 positions vacant or 26% vacant in the Grounds Maintenance Division. He said the reason for those decreases over the years was they took a lot of the lower-level positions and traded them out for different positions higher up in the Org Chart. If they had 2 groundskeepers that were difficult to fill those positions, they might get rid of 2 to create a new position further up the Org Chart hiring a higher paid position that got more interest in the market.

He said just for the field work itself, dragging for practices and games, focusing on baseball and softball fields, they had 5 positions budgeted. For field, they had 1 crew leader, 1 lead groundskeeper, 1 groundskeeper, and 2 temp workers. Those 5 staff members covered every single baseball or softball field from Daniel Island through the Peninsula across West Ashley, James Island, and Johns Island. In a typical week, they were responsible for 32 baseball or softball fields. In the height of the season in April, that was 95 drags per week. There were 6 on the Peninsula, 9 in West Ashley, 4 on Daniel Island, 9 on James Island, and 4 on Johns Island. He said they tried to split those staff members up into two teams assuming they had two trucks available. It was a lot of coverage for 5 guys. When the Recreation Program put their schedules together, that was what they got each week. He showed the Peninsula, Daniel Island, West Ashley, James Island, and Johns Island schedules which had all the locations Councilmember Parker had mentioned. Westchester was scheduled twice a week, and with those 5 staff members and based on weather delays, they might hit 80% of the requested practice drags in a week in the high season, and, hopefully, all the games. For field locations, it just went into more practicing. He said basically it came down to the depth of their chart of the budgeted athletics staff. They just couldn't keep up with the current schedule based on the increases and the staffing in the Parks Department for the last ten years. In 2018 and 2019 they were working with Ms. Wharton, the HR Department, and the Mayor, and they were getting some place good until COVID hit. In 2019, they ramped up on hiring and new staffing in the Parks Department and then had a considerable setback over the past couple years. He said what they were doing currently was they had a complete reorganization happening and it would be in their budget request this year. There was going to be a lot of new staff member, new positions, requested to keep up with the growing population, and all the new places they were constructing as well as the existing ones that they wanted to keep up better. They only had enough people to do so much work, so those things were all on the schedule. It was just having the ability to get to them. He said that was like big picture field maintenance discussion items and staffing. He wished he had a magic wand where he could create two or three more crews so they could get to everyone and focus on more of a regional based maintenance program where they had crew responsible for John's Island fields and James Island fields, and then that was all they did but the one crew they had currently crossed

the entire City every week. He said it was hard to commit to new places when they couldn't even keep up with what they had. They were working on new staffing, new budget increases. Councilmember Parker said she completely understood and knew about the staffing issues, and they all knew that the staff they did have was spread incredibly thin doing a ton of work Citywide. She always relayed that to her constituents, and they understood, but she along with the other Councilmembers on the Committee felt that as a City they needed to come up with a solution. They knew they weren't going to fix the staffing issues for the fall season, and she knew they had probably already mapped out all of it, but being one with three children in recreation, she knew that having all the different coaches that some coaches would add another practice. It was wonderful that they had all of those wonderful volunteers willing to give their time to these children, but she thought one of the most important pieces was having the fields ready to use, safe, drug, mowed, cleared, and whatever needed to be done so that people could utilize them for the recreation practices. She agreed with Mr. Kronsberg for next budget season, but she thought the Committee needed to come up with a solution to get the fields usable this season. She was talking about this fall and what they could do until they solved that staffing shortage.

Councilmember Sakran asked Mr. Kronsberg if it was the hourly rates and not being competitive enough in terms of the staffing challenge or if they just didn't have enough people in a pool to recruit even if the hourly rates were what they should be. Mr. Kronsberg said it was a little bit of everything. The athletic field crews got paid a little bit of a differential, so they got paid a little bit more than the regular lead groundskeepers or crew leaders because the work was a lot, and it was a lot of territory to cover. It was hard to hire people. It was hard to manage that process while the superintendents were trying to do the daily work. It was a little bit of a revolving door when it came to hiring and attrition. They had to weed through all the applicants. At this level, they didn't get any experienced folks applying for those jobs. Currently, they had three full-time employees that covered the total area with two temporary workers, so it was the volume of territory. In the last 10 to 15 years, it had grown considerably, and they just needed to grow their staff. He said the last pay bump certainly helped, but there were a lot of open positions still. It was a lot of territory to cover, and they didn't have enough positions to fill to cover that much territory and add all the neighborhood-type parks that weren't programmed by the Recreation Department. They tried to focus on the Recreation league sports and the permitted adult sports, but they didn't have the bandwidth or the bench depth to hit every single ball field every week, so staffing was number one.

Councilmember Sakran asked if they had folks in HR that helped recruit for different departments or was it generic and they just took in applications. Mr. Kronsberg said it was his understanding that HR had just hired two new recruitment specialists, so he thought there were three that worked in that area. He hadn't met them yet as they were brand new. Councilmember Sakran said as they thought about the budget for next year and the rates, from his perspective as a businessowner they had to increase their menu prices three times over the course of the year, mainly because they weren't sure where that sweet spot was in terms of inflation as the numbers kept going up. He encouraged his fellow Councilmembers and Mr. Kronsberg when putting the budget request in for next year that he wouldn't put a conservative request in. He would think about what they were going to need for the next five years. He told the Councilmembers it was going to be an increase so if they wanted those services, they had to vote yes on some of those tax increases if that was what it required. He thought it was disingenuous enough for them to sit there and complain about some of the concerns and shortfalls when they voted no on tax increases when it came tax season time. He said there were ways to get around it, but at the end

of the day, some of those bumps were substantial hourly rate increases. People were no longer working for \$16.00 an hour. Mr. Kronsberg said as far as what they were going to request, they did have kind of a 10-year plan which they wouldn't put all that at once. But as far as staffing goes for next year, they had a considerable number of positions they were going to be requesting.

Councilmember Bowden asked if it was a problem that was somewhat specific to certain parts of the City. He hadn't been getting those calls and he was wondering if it was because he wasn't talking to the right people or West Ashley was just blessed to have more space. He was trying to get a sense of whether James Island was having a huge issue and the rest were fortunate, but it was coming, or where they were on it. Ms. Yarbrough said in West Ashley the City shared Parks and Recreation services with St. Andrew's Parks and Playgrounds, so they did supply some fields and programs for West Ashley residents both City and non-City. For years, they had been known as having a strong baseball program and they still had that history and that thought. She said they didn't have the same numbers with the City in basketball, volleyball, or soccer and they didn't have any flag or tackle football, so they kind of had different uses there. Now that there were lights at Governor's Park, they had been able to take care of some of their field problems and they also came in fully built up. Downtown was the bulk of their Parks and Recreation facilities for years, so they had built some fields downtown also, but she thought Councilmember Bowden's phone might start ringing a little bit as the days got shorter and shorter. She knew that Chairman Shealy could weigh in that his did because everyone was going to start looking for a field for their child's team to practice on. That could be the kid that played travel soccer, travel baseball, or whatever because there were so few lighted fields available for the general public to use. So, then, on the weekends those neighborhood fields that Councilmember Parker talked about became nice looking on a Saturday or Sunday to grab for a practice. She told Councilmember Bowden he would hear the same thing. Currently, people were still enjoying the longer days, but they were starting to get shorter. By the end of September, teams weren't going to be able to practice in the afternoons after school, so she thought Councilmember Bowden would start hearing it a little bit, but his situation was different than Councilmember Parker's.

Councilmember Parker said they knew about and had talked about paying employees since she had been on Council, and she hoped they did. She told Councilmember Sakran that she was certain that James Island was more than willing to have a tax increase if it meant funding their Recreation and making their fields and programming better. With regard to a solution for the fall, she mentioned private partnerships. She said the City had the money to maintain, but just didn't have the staff. She asked what the solution was and if it was outside contracts. She said obviously there were vacant position savings. She asked Mr. Kronsberg what those were and could they utilize those. She knew they had to do it with Environmental Services. She said if they had those vacant position savings, shouldn't they be utilizing them to maintain some of their existing fields to help the City's Recreation programming to open it up giving them the space and the luxury to say which fields were open and available. Those were some solutions. She asked if they were desperately needing a private partnership to come to those fields and maintain them. She saw on the dragging schedule that they had Plymouth and Midway 5-day drag and those were around the corner from each other. Mr. Kronsberg said those fields which were general weekly fields, and he knew that Midway and Plymouth got some programming, but typically some of those other neighborhood parks weren't programmed outside of the permitted activities that maybe a neighborhood group comes in and has a softball tournament or something. Basically, the Recreation Program dedicated game fields and practice fields were what they tried to get through, but they didn't always get through all the practices. They tried to get through all the game field

dragging every week, but with just three to five people traversing the entire City limits there was only so much they could do. He said from a contract point of view or a partnership point of view, he didn't know who the partners would be. The school district contracted most of their field work out, but they got a lot less use, so they didn't have a daily use routine like the City did across the entire City limits. He was open to all recommendations, but they could investigate contract servicing. He didn't know who the partners would be. Councilmember Parker asked if they could use the vacant position savings to contract the maintenance of those fields. Mr. Kronsberg said historically that was how a lot of their contracts were funded, but they would have to talk to Ms. Wharton and the budget folks in BFRC. He didn't allocate where the funds would come from and where they would go. He just asked for them, and if they got them, they spent them, so that was outside of his day-to-day management.

Mayor Tecklenburg said he thought the suggestion of seeking an outside contractor to help fill in where needed was a good one. He asked Mr. Hamer to give the Committee any information he might have about who CCSD used for their fields as the Mayor didn't think they did their fields in-house. Mr. Hamer said they did have an outside contractor helping and he would be happy to share that with Mr. Kronsberg. He said they were undergoing renewing their grounds contracts which would include the athletic fields, and that request for proposals was ongoing currently. So, they would be getting perhaps a new company, but overall, he had been satisfied with it. He knew the challenge that Mr. Kronsberg was talking about with not having enough capacity in-house. It was a resource that they used and so far, it had worked good for them. Mayor Tecklenburg told Mr. Hamer if he would share that then the Committee could investigate who won their request for proposal, but maybe the others, as well, since the City was only doing it on a part-time basis. He told Mr. Kronsberg he might check with The Citadel, College of Charleston, or anybody else keeping up fields, as they might have contractors they weren't aware of to check on.

Chairman Shealy said a long time ago he coached high school baseball for three years and their baseball players drug their fields before practice. He asked Ms. Yarbrough if it was out of the realm of possibilities to ask some of their volunteer coaches and/or parents if they would drag fields when there weren't enough people working to drag fields. Ms. Yarbrough said Mr. Kronsberg could weigh in on as to whether or not he would train or have some guidelines on how to do that. She said their Recreation staff helped sometimes, as well. When the Parks Department left at 3:30 p.m when their day ends, if they got a late afternoon shower, they had the ability to chalk lines, to throw some turf down, and to get some water off the fields. They tried to help on that also, but she just didn't have the staff to do that every day and time. She said the challenge with volunteers, and they had some great volunteers that coached in their program that she knew were just like an employee, was when they counted on volunteers and if they didn't show, they were still ultimately responsible and stuck with it. She deferred to Mr. Kronsberg to speak to what he was comfortable with in getting equipment on their fields, where they would store that equipment, and those kinds of things. It had some challenges, but there were some programs across the State that did use volunteers to help do some things, as well.

Councilmember Sakran said they had seniors and juniors across the County that were looking for positions and looking for jobs. He wondered if that was something the City could work with CCSD in the partnership to recruit, train, and pay those folks. He didn't know specifically the technical skills it required. He asked if they were just talking about groundskeeping and mowing the lawns. Mr. Kronsberg said it wasn't hard to mess up an infield, so they had to have some skill and knowledge on how to do it. With their superintendent level and assistant superintendent level to

the crew leaders, they should know what they were doing. They tried to hit the games at least once a day, but they would hit them once, drag those infields, but they had to be careful not to create lips from the transition from the infield to the outfield because balls can take a bad hop. There were a lot of little nuances that they needed to keep an eye on that a lot of people wouldn't really know. It wasn't that hard to create some of those safety issues if they weren't doing it correctly. In the afternoon, if there were multiple games, the staff might drag and chalk some batter's box lines. They didn't have the ability to do it between games if there were multiple games in the afternoon, but everything helped, and he thought if they had coaches and volunteers that came out between games that was something that certainly could happen. Councilmember Sakran said he was thinking of more of a formal pipeline almost like a training program at the high school level. He didn't know what their high schools had, but he was just curious to investigate and think if there could be that opportunity to work with CCSD to get some seniors and juniors that were interested. He asked if it was landscaping and if folks wanted to learn how to do golf courses. Mr. Kronsberg said it was like that turf management track when they got into college, and there might be some Recreation majors out there. He said that was all creating new programs and going out there and trying to find those folks, but it was a good idea. Ms. Yarbrough said the golf course had been talking about it as well in that turf management vein and trying to find young folks that wanted to get into that industry with all the golf courses in the Lowcountry. She said they had done a good job in Myrtle Beach around their technical school and all of the golf courses there, so that was a conversation that started at the golf course level at the Muni and some other public/private courses in the area. She thought it could tie-in to the ball fields, as well. She didn't know if that was high school or technical school, but she thought that was definitely something that if the City couldn't find the workforce, then the City needed to help build that workforce. Councilmember Sakran agreed, but he knew it was a capacity issue. Ms. Yarbrough said it was capacity and she definitely saw the need for it if someone could help create it.

Councilmember Parker said she could speak for many of her volunteers in that they were already dragging the field sometimes to play on them to get the kids an extra practice here or there or on other fields. Mayor Tecklenburg thought they were doing that to a degree already and they were willing to do that because they just wanted their kids to have a good field when they went out. He once was a volunteer coach and used to do a little bit of that. Even with the willing volunteers it would take a little bit of training and thought on the City's part to have the right things in place and to have the tools of the trade there for them to do their job. He thought it was a great conversation and should lead them both to the professional side of finding some outside contractors, but also to take a good and hard look on the training and the little bit of equipment to have available to have some volunteers help.

Councilmember Bowden said it sounded like some of those things may take a little bit more work and thought than others particularly in getting students involved. He asked if they could have at their next meeting an update on the contractors that the school district used and other entities, and whether that was feasible since that would be about the time when Ms. Yarbrough expected his phone to start ringing. Mr. Kronsberg said he would reach out to Mr. Hamer and get that contact information and do a little sleuthing. Chairman Shealy said it was a good conversation and he thanked everyone for their input.

d. Update on WPAL park site status:

Mr. Kronsberg said the design process was underway. They had held neighborhood meetings. Geo Tech consultants had been out doing soil borings to understand the water table and what sort of stormwater design they were going to have to utilize to construct access into the park. He didn't think anybody would be surprised that there was a very high-water table out there as the site was very low. They were going through that design process with the engineers. The TRC submittal was scheduled for mid-September. Dock and pier designs were both underway with some concurrent reviews, but with OCRM they were trying to shorten the dock a little bit. The existing dock was about a thousand feet which was the maximum dock they could have to get to navigable water, so they were trying to put a little turn in the dock and get to some deep water with a couple hundred feet shorter. They knew that the existing structure out there was constructed in a residential fashion, and it wasn't very robust, so what they had to do for municipal access and accessibility was going to be a little bit more of a robust structure. Hopefully, based on permitting, it would be able to go out to bid in Q1, Q2 of next year assuming they got their permits approved through the permitting agencies. Councilmember Parker asked Mr. Kronsberg what the approximate cost was of what was going out to bid. Mr. Kronsberg said they were working on estimates currently and were looking at probably over a million dollars to get the dock installed. He said that didn't include any parking areas, picnic shelters, or restroom structures, so they were trying to pull all those numbers together currently.

Mayor Tecklenburg said when he went out to the public input session and drove from where they had that down to the park, it was very clear the comments were correct that they needed better access to the property particularly for City of Charleston residents that lived on the Savannah Highway side of the property. When they got down Wappoo Road where it started to hit the water's edge or the marsh edge and it took a left, the sidewalk ended there. He said this would be a different project through the City's Public Works/Public Services Department, but he believed they ought to have an extension of the sidewalk built by the time they opened that new park. He said part of the sidewalk would have to go over the marsh. About a week after that meeting and realization, he was driving over to the James Island Intergovernmental meeting, and it was like that portion of the sidewalk along Dills Bluff Road where it went out like a little walkway over the marsh. There was a little section of that stretch along Wappoo Road where they would have to do a similar thing and he was sure that was going to also involve some funding and permitting, but he thought they needed to provide a safe way for the citizens other than getting in their car to be able to walk or ride their bike down to that park. He said they didn't have a budget yet for that. He had asked Public Works to look into it, and start to develop a budget on that, but he felt strongly that it needed to go hand-in-hand with the development of the park to add a sidewalk as well. Chairman Shealy said he thought it was from Garden Street, which was the street that Stono Park Elementary was on, all the way to that park and they had the backside the creek that wrapped around Capri Isle was the part where they were going to have to go over that creek. For pedestrians walking or riding bikes up and down Wappoo Road, it could be dangerous trying to get to that park, so he agreed they needed to have something. It was the biggest concern when they had the public comment was that there was no sidewalk access to get there from between Garden Street as well as the limited parking.

e. Update on Fort Pemberton status:

Mr. Kronsberg said there was a TRC agenda item that week so the consultants were bringing the Conceptual Plan to TRC for the first step in the permitting process, and hopefully that would go well. All of those were in the queue in that permit process. There was also a requirement of the original PUD that was for the formal development that was going in there that the property was

under BAR-L jurisdiction, so there was also a BAR submittal that week to talk about the demolition of the existing house there which was set on fire in an arson scenario. It was burned out on the interior. The Fire Department got the fire put out, but the house was boarded up and had lots of fire and smoke damage, so that demolition permit was in the BAR-L queue. They were also working with the State Historic Preservation Office and the South Carolina Battleground Preservation Trust who hold the conservation easements on the Earthworks getting their concurrence in the park plans as well. The outlook for that one was about the same for Q1, Q2 Phase 1 public access bids to get the park established and opened to the public based on permitting schedules.

f. Request to name the WPAL park site the Bill Saunders Park:

Mr. Kronsberg said it was going through the Recreation Commission. Ms. Yarbrough said the application for facility dedication had not been seen by the Citizen Committee yet, but they had done it before where the Recreation Committee approved something and moved it forward and she had gone back and reported. She said they had a request in, and it was to name the park for Bill Saunders who was a war hero and legend of the Civil Rights Movement. He was raised on Johns Island and awarded a Purple Heart during a special ceremony at The Citadel in the year 2002. He was owner of WPAL Radio Station from 1972 to 1998 and it broadcasted local issues. It was the first radio station to return to air after Hugo hit when people needed their information. The request met all the City's guidelines and regulations for how they named a Parks and Recreation facility. She was bringing this to the Recreation Committee for a vote, and after the motion they could report out to the full committee and then she would take it back to the Citizen Committee as an after report.

On a motion of Councilmember Sakran, seconded by Mayor Tecklenburg, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the request to name the WPAL park site the Bill Saunders Park.

There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 3:15 p.m.

Submitted by Wanda Stepp
Clerk of Council's Office